

NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Commissaries can help customers keep New Year's resolutions

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FORT LEE, VA – Two New Year's resolutions usually found on everyone's list are "lose weight" and "eat healthy," but keeping them is the hard part. This year, adding a resolution to shop more at the commissary might help as the Defense Commissary Agency debuts a series of shelf signs featuring dietary tips. The signs are part of the ongoing "It's Your Choice, Make it Healthy" campaign.

"We want to be the nutritional leader of the military community," said Patrick B. Nixon, chief executive officer and acting director of DeCA. "Commissaries offer health and wellness products, fresh produce, lean meats and much more – all at cost. And, one of the best ways to lose weight and eat healthy is to know what's in the products you're buying. You can't always do that in restaurants or the fast food drive-thru, but you can do it by reading labels at the commissary."

The dietary tips, based on the new "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" from the United States departments of Agriculture and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, are located where customers will find pizza and frozen entrees, juice, dairy, canned vegetables and fruits, oils and fats, cereals, bread, pasta, rice, canned meats and snack foods. A generic tip tells customers what "daily value" means on product labels.

"We're not trying to tell people what is good or bad for them," said Nixon. "We're just offering some 'food for thought' while they shop. And since we are very concerned about food safety, customers will also see safety tips on food handling, preparation and storage."

DeCA collaborated on the shelf signs with a Defense Department weight management integrated project team of dieticians, including representatives from the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Environmental Health Center, the Air Force Medical Service, and the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine. The signs are a model for the grocery industry.

“It’s Your Choice, Make it Healthy” ties in with TRICARE’s “Healthy Choices for Life,” an awareness campaign addressing three major health problems identified by DoD. According to Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr., assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, “Tobacco, alcohol, and obesity-related issues are leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Preventing these unhealthy behaviors is critical to the readiness of our forces and the health of our nation as a whole.”

“We’re partnering with TRICARE and the medical and nutrition community to get military families thinking more about using the commissary to help them win the battle of the bulge,” said Nixon. “Commissaries and medical benefits are consistently listed as the top military benefits. Since we serve the same customer base, it makes sense to partner in our outreach efforts, both as an agency – and at the installation level.”

DeCA is encouraging store directors at all 268 commissaries worldwide to partner with health and wellness professionals for commissary tours and health and wellness events, particularly during National Nutrition Month in March and Commissary Awareness Month in May. “The shelf signs will make ideal tour stops,” said Nixon.

The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of 30 percent or more on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$2,700 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.